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SUBJECT: 10th Party Congress: CPV Offers Preview, Aims for Transparency

Ref: A) Hanoi 767; B) Hanoi 11; C) Hanoi 628; D) HCMC 320;
E) Hanoi 30; F) Hanoi 791; G) Hanoi 771

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Summary

1. (SBU) In a preview of the Communist Party's upcoming 10th National Congress, Deputy Prime Minister Vu Khoan underscored that the Party's key focus will be on how to continue Vietnam's economic and social development efforts. Sticking close to well-known positions in a presentation to the diplomatic corps and international press that was aimed at showing off the Party's transparency, the Deputy Prime Minister stressed the need for the Party to bolster the "doi moi" (renovation) policy, fight corruption and tackle pressing social issues. Contrary to a number of recent rumors, the Party Congress delegates will not depart from past practice and directly elect the Party Secretary General. Instead, they will elect a new Central Committee, which in turn will elect the Secretary General, Politburo and Party Secretariat. DPM Khoan did not reveal anything about personnel changes. End Summary.

Mechanics and Agenda

2. (SBU) On short notice, the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) convened an April 12 briefing for the diplomatic corps and foreign press on the April 18-25 10th National Party Congress (NPC) (Ref A). Deputy Prime Minister and Party Secretariat member Vu Khoan led the briefing, and he opened

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by explaining that the upcoming congress is the culmination of six months' work by grassroots Party organizations. Some 1,178 delegates will attend the NPC; of them, 949 will represent localities and 229 will represent GVN agencies (these figures are still tentative, DPM Khoan noted). The 1,178 delegates will belong to 73 delegations: 64 groups from provinces and cities and nine functional blocs representing State agencies in various disciplines: police and security; the offices of the President and Prime Minister; culture and ideology; science and education; economics; mass organizations and mobilization; external relations; and, internal affairs. The delegation sizes are determined by the number of Party members in their respective organizations and, in the case of regional groups, the locality's population and "importance."

3. (SBU) On this occasion, and in departure from past practice, no foreign delegations will be invited to attend

the NPC, DPM Khoan continued. This will allow delegates to focus on the discussions at hand. During the NPC, there will be daily briefings for the diplomatic corps and press, and a post-NPC summary of achievements. "There is nothing to hide," the DPM averred.

¶4. (SBU) The NPC will have four main items on its agenda: review to what extent the goals set at the 9th NPC (in 2001) have or have not been met; look back on 20 years of Vietnam's "doi moi" (renovation) policy and see what was and was not achieved; discuss tasks related to Party building, including amending the Party statutes (Ref B); and, elect Party leadership in the form of the Central Committee, the Party Secretary, Politburo and the Secretariat to steer the Party's work.

Economy Shapes NPC Agenda

¶5. (SBU) Driving this agenda will be four main "themes," DPM Khoan explained. First among them is the recognition that achieving Vietnam's central task of economic development requires the Party to increase its leadership capacity and "fighting spirit." Second is the need to promote Vietnam's national unity. "Whenever Vietnam is able to come together, it can do great things," DPM Khoan said. Vietnam's successes over the past five years are proof of this, and the Party must tap into the energy and creativity of the people. The third theme is the need to "boost comprehensively" the doi moi policy and strengthen the doi moi process. Finally, tying these three themes together is the fourth and most important theme of lifting Vietnam from underdevelopment and low income.

Political Report

¶6. (SBU) In the run-up to the 10th NPC, the Party invited the people of Vietnam to comment on the draft Political

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Report, DPM Khoan noted (Refs C and D). In reviewing these comments, the Party divided them into three categories: those that were constructive and expressed goodwill and thus were incorporated into the Political Report and other CPV documents; those that required further study and consideration; and, those that required the Party's "feedback to achieve consensus." This commentary process was meant to involve not just the 3.1 million members of the CPV, but the entire population, and even overseas Vietnamese. (DPM Khoan further noted that Party membership rolls had increased by 12.3 percent, from approximately 2.5 million members, in the five years since the previous NPC.) To put the Political Report into final, the NPC delegates must vote on and approve it.

Vietnam's Successes...

¶7. (SBU) The Political Report contains an assessment of the past five years and the tasks that Vietnam has accomplished (Ref E). These include: maintaining Vietnam's rapid economic growth, at an average of 7.5 percent year-on-year; reducing poverty and eradicating hunger; ensuring the nation's stability; building a law-based country and pursuing legal reform; and, underlining the importance of Party building.

...and What Still Needs to be Done

¶8. (SBU) However, there are issues and concerns that still need to be addressed, DPM Khoan continued. These are: Vietnam's growth rate is not commensurate with its potential, and Vietnam needs to increase its economic efficiency; problems in education and public health remain,

and the poverty level (23 percent) is still too high; stability, national defense and public security need to be further improved; and, mass organizations and State agencies need to catch up with the rest of society. DPM Khoan explained that these shortcomings are due to a "mindset" that is not in line with reality; the implementation and enforcement of laws and decrees are poor; and, personnel policies remain problematic. However, in spite of these problems, they do not overshadow everything that Vietnam has achieved, the DPM said.

Major Tasks

¶9. (SBU) Vietnam has set for itself the goal of lifting itself from underdevelopment and, specifically, seeks to increase its per capita income from USD 640/year to USD 1000/year by 2010. Sustainable growth with social development, environmental protection and increased economic efficiency are Vietnam's top priorities. In public commentary on the draft Political Report, there was general agreement on the major tasks facing the nation:

- Improve the market mechanism;
- Accelerate industrialization and modernization;
- Place a high priority on the role of industry, because Vietnam is still basically an agricultural nation;
- Stress regional and international integration, including WTO accession and full global integration by 2010;
- Emphasize education and training and the development of human resources for the development of the nation;
- Pay attention to social equity and poverty reduction;
- Increase awareness of culture;
- Continue to strive to maintain a peaceful environment, defend the nation and maintain stability;
- Maintain the policy of being a friendly and reliable partner with all nations (Ref F) and continue to play an active role in international organizations ("Vietnam must contribute to, and not just benefit from, international organizations," DPM Khoan said);
- Take measures to enhance national unity and the strengthen the role of mass organizations, address issues involving ethnic minorities and religious groups;

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- Strengthen the rule of law; and,
- Improve Party building, which to date has been lacking.

¶10. (SBU) On this last point, DPM Khoan explained that, to do this, the Party must concretize and institutionalize the mechanisms in which the Party plays a leading role, the Government is an "ombudsman" and the people are the "master." The Party also has to ensure that it is clean; right now, there is too much bureaucracy, corruption and waste, he acknowledged (Ref G).

Leadership Selection Process: Nothing New

¶11. (SBU) The DPM explained the NPC will elect the new Central Committee, and the Central Committee will elect the Party Secretary General, Politburo and Secretariat. (Note: In response to a question from a Japanese Embassy representative, DPM Khoan denied the rumor that, in a change from the past, the over 1,000 NPC delegates would vote

directly for the Secretary General. End Note.) All Party members can run for Central Committee positions, and the process of vetting candidates has been taking place for several months. Responding to a question from a French Embassy official, the DPM said that the list of NPC delegates would not be made public. "It is not secret, but it also does not need to be published in the press," he said.

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